NOVA SCOTIA

Department of Transportation and Public Works

2001 Customer Satisfaction Survey
Provincial Highway System

Overall Highlights Report

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The 2001 Customer Satisfaction Survey was conducted by the Marketing Research Centre for the Department of Transportation and Public Works.

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2001 Highway Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Public Works conducts a Customer Satisfaction Survey to determine and evaluate the public's satisfaction with the provincial highway system. It is also used to determine the department's effectiveness in providing services on the provincial highway system. This report highlights the survey findings[1].

The 2001 Highway Customer Satisfaction Survey is based on telephone interviews with 2073 residents of Nova Scotia, 16 years of age and older. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with a variety of highway services. This sample is segmented by four provincial transportation districts: Central, Northern, Eastern, and Western. This allows for a comparison and analysis at the district level.

A random sample of 2073 respondents provides a sampling error of plus or minus 2.15%, with a 95% confidence level. The margin of error for each of the four districts is shown in the following table.

District	Population (over 16)	Sample Size	Margin of Error (95% confidence level)
Central	323,938	519	± 4.3%
Eastern	152,163	518	± 4.3%
Western	168,891	519	± 4.3%
Northern	108,459	517	± 4.3%
Overall	753,451	2073	± 2.15%

Overall Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with the provincial highway system is a measurement of all the variables that make up customer satisfaction. There are many variables that can influence the way people respond, for example, the number of motor vehicle accidents that occur in the winter season.

Overall, Nova Scotians were generally satisfied with the provincial highway system. Half of all residents were either "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the provincial highway system.

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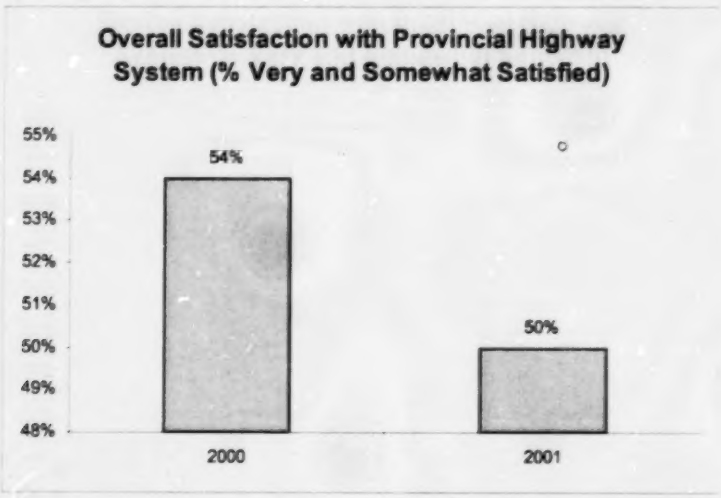
[1] As the data has been weighted to reflect the actual population by district, and percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, not all tables will add to 100%.

Comparing the 2001 results with the 2000 results of this survey, there is a significant[2] decline in the satisfaction that Nova Scotians have for the provincial highway system.

In 2000, the mean score was 2.5 out of a possible 4, on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 was "poor" and 4 was "excellent". In 2001, the mean score dropped to 2.44, indicating a significant decrease in overall satisfaction.



[2] Statistically, the differences are calculated at the 95% confidence level, and are considered significant.

Residents in three of the four districts indicated lower satisfaction as compared with the results from the 2000 survey. Western Nova Scotia had an increase in satisfaction from 2000 (48%) to 2001 (53%). Eastern Nova Scotia expressed the highest level of satisfaction (54%), while Central Nova Scotia expressed the lowest amount of satisfaction (48%).

The Central district was the only district with a significant decrease in satisfaction from 2000 to 2001. Residents, in the Central district, indicated a satisfaction mean of 2.62 in 2000 and 2.47 in 2001.

District	Central		Northern		Eastern		Western	
Year	2000 %	2001 %	2000 %	2001 %	2000 %	2001 %	2000 %	2001 %
Very satisfied	8	8	9	9	10	7	8	6
Somewhat satisfied	49	40	44	41	45	47	40	47
Somewhat dissatisfied	29	27	27	28	28	24	32	29
Very dissatisfied	11	21	19	21	16	22	18	17

Why are Nova Scotians dissatisfied?

Nova Scotians are dissatisfied for various reasons. The most frequent responses were:

- Potholes on the roads
- Roads are poorly paved/maintained
- Poor repair/condition

These responses were also the most frequent responses, in a slightly different order, in the 2000 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Highway Services - Rating the Department's Performance

To obtain feedback on how the department performs in providing highway services, we asked a number of questions about the importance and the quality of these services.

How important are highway services to Nova Scotians?

Nova Scotians feel every highway service is important. However, the level of importance for highway services has decreased since the 2000 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Importance of Highway Services

Factor	Somewhat Important 2000 %	Somewhat Important 2001 %	Very Important 2000 %	Very Important 2001 %
Amount of four-lane highways	27	28	65	57
Filling cracks and potholes	10	12	88	77
Resurfacing sections of the highways	20	23	76	66
Ice/snow removal during a storm	7	13	91	77
Completeness of the clean up (ice/snow) after a storm	12	15	87	74
Highway design (curves, grading, width)	20	30	76	56
Number of passing lanes	29	33	66	53
Length of passing lanes	23	30	73	56
All pavement markings including yellow/white lines	9	14	89	76
Roadside brush/tree clearing	38	37	50	46
Helpfulness of non-commercial highway signs	24	24	70	66
Amount of non-commercial highway signs	28	31	63	56
Maintenance of non-commercial highway signs	27	30	66	59
Width of highway shoulders	26	29	68	59
Surface condition of highway shoulders	25	26	71	62
Grading and dust control of gravel roads	37	37	52	47
Ditches and culverts	37	39	53	45
Bridges	14	24	82	67

How do Nova Scotians rate the quality of highway services?

The number of residents who rated the highway services as "excellent" were very few. In every question about services, residents responded "excellent" less than 10% of the time.
Nova Scotians felt that the quality of 12 of the 18 services decreased significantly from the previous year.

Quality of highway services

Factor	Good 2000 %	Good 2001 %	Excellent 2000 %	Excellent 2001 %
Amount of four-lane highways	38	33	5	5
Filling cracks and potholes	23	20	2	3
Resurfacing sections of the highway	36	31	3	3
Ice/snow removal during a storm	49	48	9	8
Completeness of the clean up (ice/snow) after a storm	55	49	11	8
Highway design including curves, grading, width	56	51	7	6
Number of passing lanes	42	40	3	4
Length of passing lanes	47	41	5	4
All pavement markings including yellow/white lines	55	52	11	8
Roadside brush and tree clearing	54	54	9	7
Helpfulness of non-commercial highway signs	63	62	14	9
Amount of non-commercial signs	62	59	9	7
Maintenance of non-commercial	62	63	11	7
Width of highway shoulders	46	44	5	5
Surface condition of highway shoulders	45	43	4	4
Grading /dust control of gravel roads	38	34	2	4
Ditches and culverts	57	49	5	4
Bridges	62	57	8	7

The six services that showed no significant decrease in quality between 2000 and 2001 were:

- Ice/snow removal during a storm
- Number of passing lanes
- Roadside brush & tree clearing
- Width of highway shoulders
- Surface condition of highway shoulders
- Grading/dust control of gravel roads

The services that showed the largest decline[3] were:

- Amount of non-commercial highway signs
- Length of the passing lanes
- Resurfacing of the highway
- Completeness of the cleanup
- Filling cracks and potholes
- Ditches and culverts

The highway services that received the lowest ratings[3] from residents were:

- Filling in cracks and potholes
- Resurfacing sections of the highway
- Amount of four-lane highways
- Number of passing lanes
- Length of the passing lanes

The services that received the highest rating[3] were:

- Amount of non-commercial highway signs
- Helpfulness of non-commercial highway signs
- Maintenance of non-commercial highway signs
- Bridges
- Ice and snow removal during a storm

Where are the gaps in highway service?

We can use the information obtained from the 2001 survey results to assist in policy decision making and highway planning. One of the ways to determine service priorities, is to measure gaps that are present between the quality rating that Nova Scotians expressed and what services Nova Scotians consider to be important. An important gap exists when the service is considered to be important and the service expectations of these same residents are not being met.

Overall, there has been a narrowing of the gap scores from 2000 to 2001. Among the areas that showed the most improvement were:

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[3] These are based upon the mean scores for quality ratings.

- Highway design
- Length of passing lanes
- Ice and snow removal
- Bridges
- Number of passing lanes

Fourteen out of eighteen services narrowed their gap, while only 2 services had the gap increase:

- Width of highway shoulders
- Helpfulness of non commercial highway signs

The Central district had the lowest gap scores in all 18 services compared to the other three districts. The Western district had the highest gap score in 17 out of the 18 services.

Gap Analysis

Factor	2000 %	2001 %
Filling in cracks and potholes	87	80
All pavement markings including yellow/white lines	79	73
Ice/snow removal during a storm	83	72
Completeness of the clean up (ice/snow) after a storm	77	70
Resurfacing sections of the highway	73	69
Bridges	75	65
Surface condition of highway shoulders	68	63
Helpfulness of non-commercial highway signs	58	63
Width of highway shoulders	65	73
Maintenance of non-commercial highway signs	58	58
Amount of four-lane highways	61	56
Length of passing lanes	70	56
Amount of non-commercial highway signs	59	55
Highway design, including curves, grading and width	70	55
Number of passing lanes	63	54
Roadside brush and tree clearing	45	46
Ditches and culverts	50	45
Grading and dust control of gravel roads	51	44

The largest gap percentage occurs with respect to **filling in cracks and potholes**. This is consistent with the survey results from 2000. Overall, 80% of Nova Scotians feel that filling in cracks and potholes is a very important service and the department is not meeting the service needs of residents to the highest level.

Across the province there were only slight differences between gap scores for this service in each district, with the exception of the Central district where there was a gap score of 62%, which is considerably lower than the Eastern (84%), Northern (84%), and Western (89%) districts. The good news is that the overall gap for this service has narrowed since last year when it was at 87%.

The gap score for **surface conditions of shoulders** decreased to 63% from a score of 68% in 2000. This indicates that Nova Scotians feel that there is an improvement in this area. Central district had the lowest gap score of 45% which is considerably lower than Eastern (66%), Northern (65%) and Western (74%).

In 2001, the **width of highway shoulders** had a gap score of 73%, this is up 8 points from last year. In previous years, services related to shoulders have not been seen as items that require particular attention, however this year, 2 of the top gap scores are items directly related to highway shoulders. This indicates that the quality of highway shoulders should be addressed. The district gap scores ranged from 41% (Central) to 73% (Western).

Currently, 8 in 10 residents felt that **pavement markings including yellow and white lines** was "very important" to them, while less than 1 in 10 (8%) of the same residents felt that the quality of the pavement markings was "excellent". This produces a gap score of 73%, which is 6 percentage points lower than last years score of 79%. District gap scores ranged from 58% (Central) to 80% (Western).

The gap score for **ice and snow removal** has dropped 11 percentage points from last year to 72%, it was 83% in 2000. The gap for **completeness of the clean up** (after a storm) was similar, with a score of 70%. This score is down 7% from 2000. Central district was significantly lower than the other three districts.

Resurfacing of highways yielded a gap score of 69%, this is similar to last years score of 73%. Central district was the closest (50%), compared to the other 3 districts (Eastern 73%, Northern 73% and Western 78%), in meeting customers expectations.

Seventy-two percent of Nova Scotians indicated that **bridges** were "very important" to them. However, only 7% of these same residents indicated that they felt the Department of Transportation and Public Works was doing an "excellent" job in regard to bridges. This produced a gap score of 65%, down 10 percentage points from last year, when it was 75%. This represents an improvement from the previous year. Central district (47%) was significantly lower than the other three districts.

It seems that the Department of Transportation and Public Works is having moderate success with its highway signs. The gap scores for the **helpfulness, maintenance, and amount of non-commercial signs** were 63%, 58%, and 55% respectively. None of these showed a considerable change from last year. Central district had the best results with scores as low as 45%, 40% and 40% respectively.

The gap score for the **amount of four-lane highways** showed a slight improvement over last year's score. It dropped 5 percentage points to 56%. Eastern district is struggling the most to meet expectations in this service area with a gap score of 64%.

Nova Scotians appeared to be moderately satisfied with the **number and length of passing lanes**, these services had gap scores of 54% and 56% respectively. The length of passing lanes gap has decreased by 14% from 2000. Again Central district showed the best scores, with scores decreasing from 63% and 70% in 2000.

The gap score for **highway design** showed the most improvement from last year. It dropped 15 points from last year's value of 70%, to 55% this year. The smaller gap score indicated that the Department of Transportation and Public Works is narrowing the gap in meeting Nova Scotians' expectations. The gap score for the districts were Central 39%, Eastern 56%, Northern 57% and Western 69%.

For the most part, **roadside brush and tree clearing, ditches and culverts**, and **grading/dust control of gravel roads** were all satisfactory to the Nova Scotians who were surveyed, with gap scores of 46%, 45%, and 44% showing fairly strong service provision in all four districts.

The Gap Analysis provides the department with an accurate and focused tool for making choices on providing highway services in the future. While the department lacks funding to make changes to all areas of service, through incremental improvements to services and better managing the expectations of Nova Scotians, we can begin to address the existing gaps in services in a systematic manner.

Safety, Trade-offs, Improvement Priorities and Staff

Safety

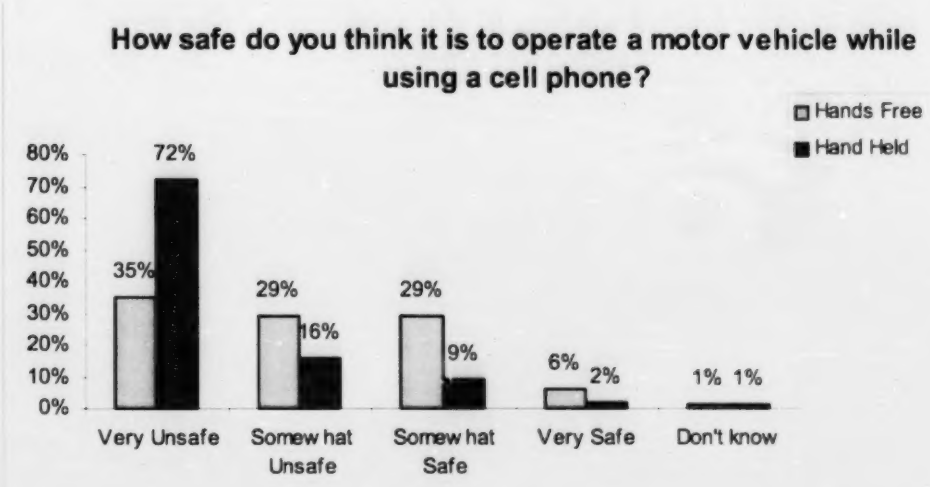
Approximately seven in ten Nova Scotians (72%), indicated that they felt "very safe" or "somewhat safe" when driving on the provincial highways. The survey results suggest that perceived driver safety has the greatest effect on the level of satisfaction with highways in Nova Scotia. The safer a person feels while driving on the highways, the more satisfied they are with the highways. These percentages are exactly the same as the results from the 2000 survey. The only significant difference was in the Eastern district where there was a reduction in the perceived safety in 2001.

Residents of Western Nova Scotia have the lowest amount of perceived safety (69%). This is consistent with the 2000 survey results.

	2001	**2000**
Central	74%	74%
Eastern	**72%**	**77%**
Northern	70%	73%
Western	69%	65%

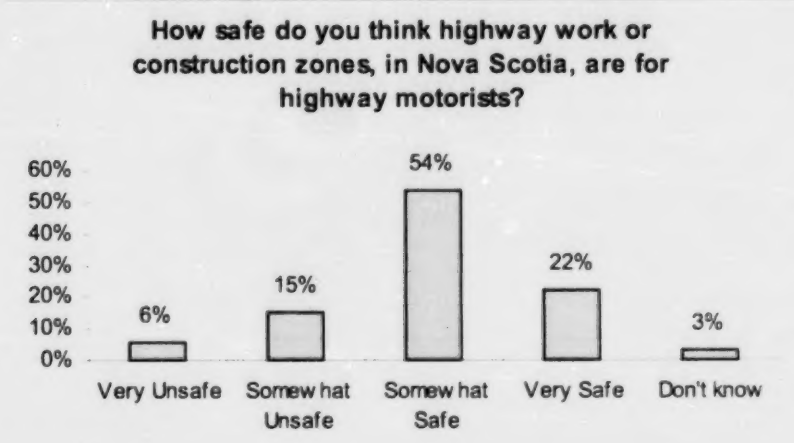
Sixty-four percent of the residents, who stated that they felt unsafe driving in Nova Scotia, indicated that the reason for this was the overall condition of the roads. This figure is up by 42% over the 2000 results.

For the first time, Nova Scotians were asked to rate how safe it is to drive in Nova Scotia while using a hands-free cell phone or a hand-held cell phone.



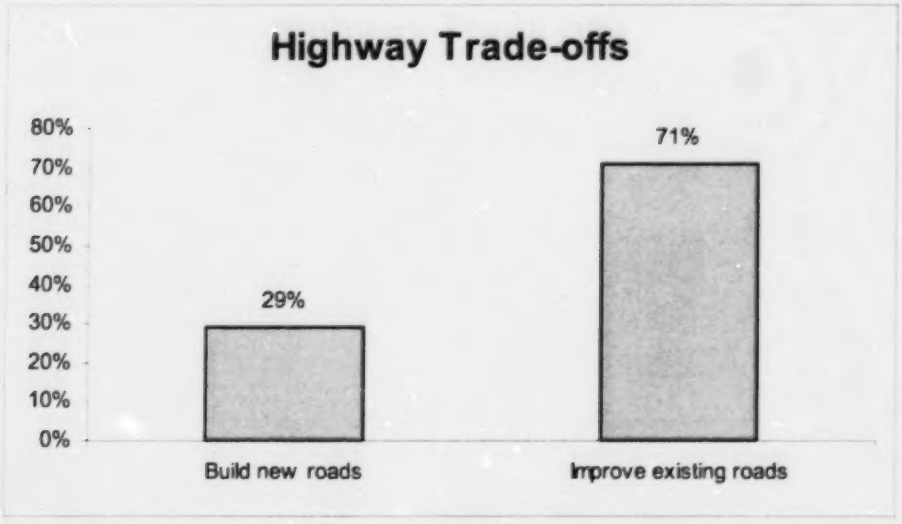
A majority of Nova Scotians indicated that they felt both hands-free (64%) and hand-held (88%) cell phones were either "very unsafe" or "somewhat unsafe". Only 2% of Nova Scotians indicated that they felt hand-held cell phones were "very safe", while 6% indicated that hands-free cell phones were "very safe".

Nova Scotians were also asked to rate how safe they think highway work or construction zones, in Nova Scotia, are for highway motorists. The results suggested that most residents (76%) felt that such work zones were safe for motorists.



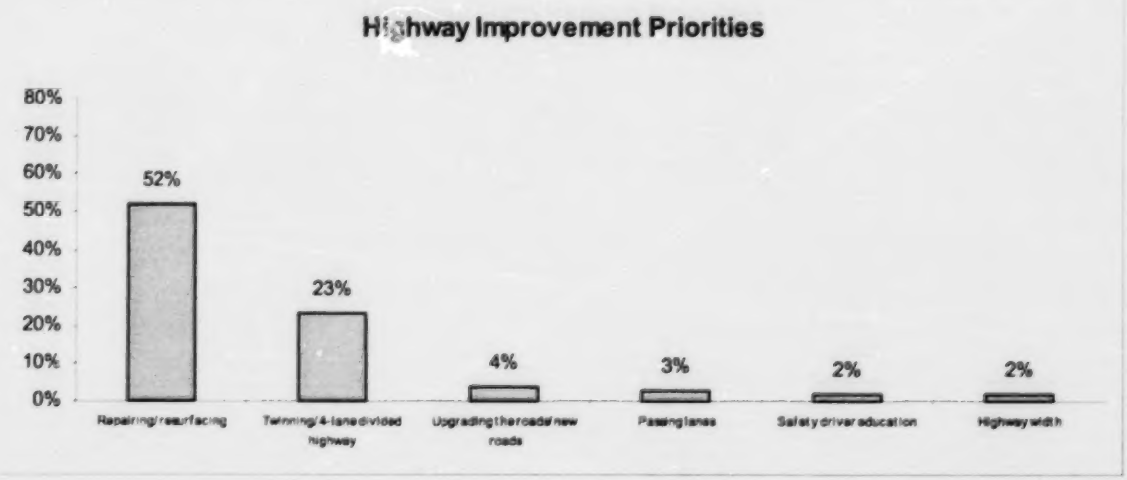
Highway Trade-offs

A large majority of the residents in Nova Scotia were in favour of the department making improvements to existing roads rather than building new roads. Regionally, those from the Eastern district (41%) felt more strongly than the Central (28%), Northern (19%) and Western (28%) districts with regard to the building of new roads.



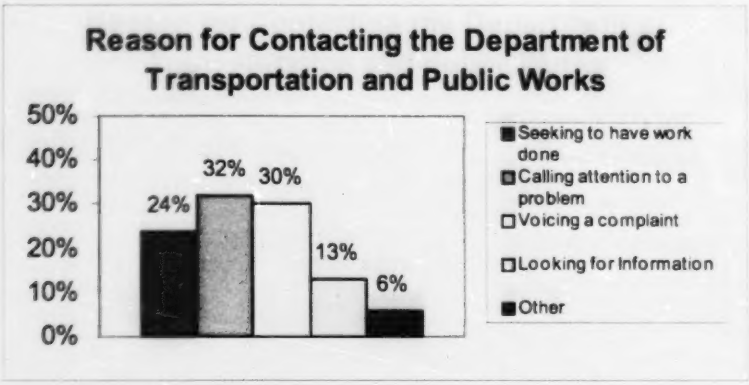
Highway Improvement Priorities

Nova Scotians say the department's main priority should be the repairing and resurfacing of the roads. The second highest priority should be to provide more twinning/four-lane/divided highways.

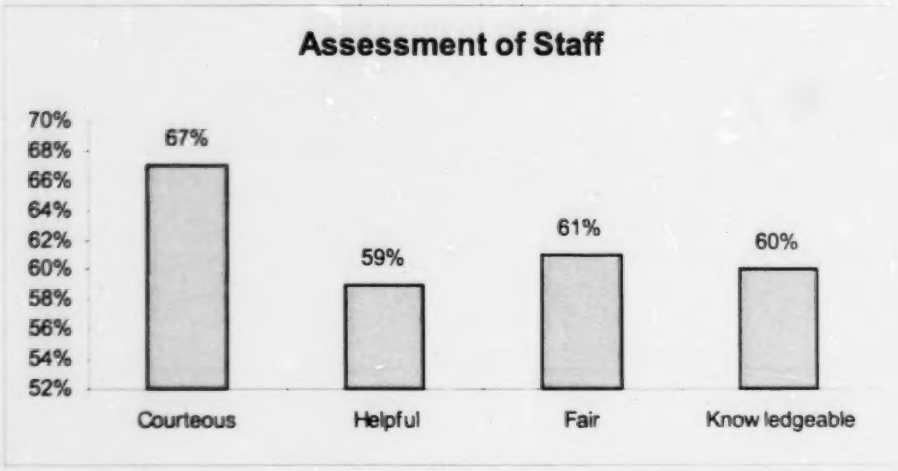


Staff

Thirteen percent of those who were surveyed said that they contacted the department in 2001, down from 18% in 2000. They cited several reasons for the contact; in most cases they were calling attention to a problem.

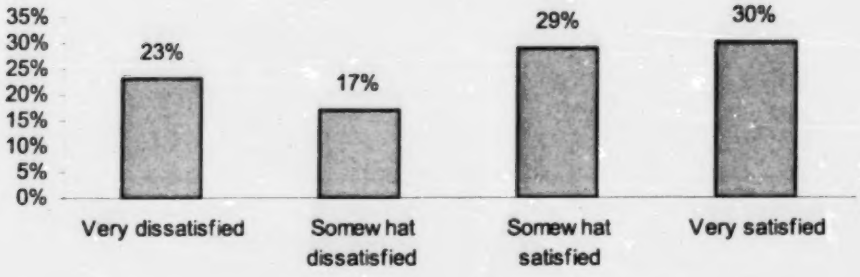


Most of the residents that contacted the department gave positive ratings to the staff for being courteous, helpful, fair, and knowledgeable. Staff courtesy received the highest rating at 67%, indicating "good" (44%) or excellent (23%).



Almost six in ten Nova Scotians (59%), who contacted the department within the past year offer a favourable assessment of the service provided.

Overall Satisfaction with Staff Service (Among those in contact with the department in the last year)



The main reason that Nova Scotians feel dissatisfied with the services provided by the department staff was due to "Not dealing with the problem".

How is this information used?

This customer satisfaction survey assists the Department of Transportation and Public Works in several ways. The survey results are used to:

- Assist TPW in finding ways to improve service delivery; for example, formulating service standards
- Report on TPW's performance in the area of customer satisfaction as part of the government-wide outcome measurement process
- Support departmental planning and decision making

The identification of gaps between the level of service customers expected and what they believed they received, revealed a number of service areas in which improvements could be made. This analysis provides the Department of Transportation and Public Works with a reliable tool for making choices on providing highway services in the future. Improvements in service delivery may be limited, due to budgetary or other constraints. However, through incremental improvements to services and by communicating the department's limitations TPW can begin to work toward addressing the existing gaps in services in a systematic manner.